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AUTHOR Wright, Eica; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to scrutinize school factors related to dropouts at the secondary level. One senior secondary school comprised the sample for the study. Telephone interviews were conducted with the dropouts; these interviews were loosely structured. and the interviewer encouraged students to talk generally about their school experiences. The information recorded by the interviewer was broken down into the 11 areas specifically queried, and codes were established within each of these broad areas. Approximately half the comments made about teachers or teaching methods were positive and about half were critical. Of the many comments about school or the school environment, roughly one-third were positive. Approximately one-third of the dropouts told the interviewer that they were doing well academically. More than half of the parents of dropouts were disappointed about their child leaving school. A large majority of the dropouts said they would advise other students to remain in school. Close to 40% of the dropouts mentioned that 1971-72 was their first year at the school. (CK)

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RESEARCH REPORT

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A SURVEY OF 1971 - 1972 DROP-OUTS IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL

Erica Wright Lynne Hindle Ruth Goldstein

February, 1973

PREFACE

THE AUTHORS ACKNOWLEDGE THE WORK DONE BY ROBERT GIBSON WHO CONDUCTED THE INTERVIEWS AND ANALYZED THE DATA, AND DOROTHY PEEBLES WHO ASSISTED IN PREPARING A DRAFT OF THE REPORT.

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INTRODUCTION

This study was designed to discover from students why they reached the decision to leave high school without obtaining a diploma or completing courses. Focus was on school related factors which contributed to their decision to drop out. During the planning phases it was agreed that external factors, such as family problems or socio-economic status, which also might influence a student to take the step of leaving school, were beyond the jurisdiction of the school and therefore would not be considered.

Definition of a Drop-Out

For the purposes of this study a drop-out was defined as:

> any student who had been enrolled in the selected secondary school and who actually attended at least one class and who subsequently left school for whatever reason to engage in any activity other than that of transferring to another regular secondary school during the school year 1971 - 1972.

PROCEDURE

Designing the Instrument and Sample Selection

Two members of the Professional Development Committee for Secondary Schools met with the researchers to discuss the form of the survey and the method of collecting the data. It was agreed that drop-outs from one senior secondary school in North York would comprise the sample for the study. Because of the lack of control over a mail-out questionnaire, it was decided that telephone interviews should be conducted with as many of the drop-outs as possible. Further, because of possible sensitive reactions to questions about dropping out, it was felt that the interviews should be conducted on a friendly informal basis. The instrument therefore was open with only one specific question asked - "Why did you leave school?" The interviewer was then to probe for additional comments. The researcher and committee members established ten factors to be queried:

teachers
marks
friends
what are you doing now?
school environment
parents
advice to students going to drop out
have you ever thought of dropping out before?
would you go back?
personal reasons (if appropriate)

A copy of the instrument may be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection

A member of the Guidance Department in the selected school prepared a list of the names of students who had dropped out during the school year 1971 - 1972. Addresses and telephone numbers of the students were also recorded.

An interviewer began telephoning these students during the last two weeks of November. There was some difficulty encountered in reaching a number of students

because of incomplete school records or because students had moved or given inaccurate information to the school.

A number of other students were located by rechecking the school files and obtaining the fathers' first names and business numbers.

Initially telephone calls were made throughout the day and early evening, as well as on week-ends. The most productive times, that is when the interviewer was able to contact students, tended to be week-day evenings, excepting Fridays. Consequently, a majority of the calls were made at that time.

Conducting the Interviews

The interviews were loosely structured and the interviewer encouraged students to talk generally about their school experiences. The interviewer attempted to establish rapport with the students at the beginning of the interview. He also refrained from pursuing sensitive topics with students who appeared reluctant to discuss them. If the student failed to cover any of the areas noted on the interview instrument, he was queried with loosely worded questions such as, 'How about your friends, what did they think?" Each interview followed an individual pattern. The responses to the initial question "Why did you leave school?" might cover all or none of the points arrived at by the committee and researchers. The interviewer then led the student through the points by querying the student on a topic most closely related to what he had been saying. Each item on the instrument was checked off as the student mentioned it to ensure that all areas were covered.

During the interviews the interviewer kept notes of what was said, attempting to record the student's actual words as much as possible. Samples of the notes resulting from three interviews are found in Appendix B.

Data Analysis and Reporting the Results

The information recorded by the interviewer was broken down into the eleven areas specifically queried, and codes were established within each of these broad areas. Other patterns emerged during this phase of the analysis; for example, 37 students spontaneously made comments about the administration. As a result, there are 12 broad areas for which codes were established, as well as the initial reactions to the first question.

Tabulations of how many people commented about a specific area are reported. In some interviews the student refused to comment about certain topics or was unable,

and in other interviews, as many as six or seven points were made by a single student in response to one query. It should be noted that some comments made in reply to one query might also relate to another topic. For example, the question, "Why did you leave school?", may have elicited a response which was pertinent to the section "Reaction to Teachers". Such comments would be coded under both sections.

Response

Of the 166 students whose names were on the list, 105 were contacted and interviewed. The interviewer was unable to reach 14 of the students although he had the correct phone number, 36 of the students on the original list were not contacted because the phone numbers obtained from the school files were incorrect and the remaining 11 did not meet the established criteria and were therefore not interviewed.

On an average the interviewer was required to make approximately four telephone calls to complete each interview. Reasons for this varied and included no answers, student not home, or student too busy.

Of the 105 students who were interviewed, 42 were girls and 63 boys. The breakdown by grade is given in the following table:

TABLE 1

Grade	No. of Students
9	6
10	31
11	25
12	23
13	14
No Answer	6
BASE (All students interviewed)	(105)

INITIAL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION:

"WHY DID YOU LEAVE SCHOOL?"

The students' initial reactions to the question "Why did you leave school?" were noted carefully and analyzed separately, as it was anticipated that the first comments might be key ones. In many cases, however, the initial responses were limited, or guarded, and only as the interview progressed did the students become more relaxed and expand on their reasons more fully. In some instances students who had been particularly hesitant about talking during the entire interview, would open up just as the interviewer was about to conclude the conversation. It was also felt, although there is no specific evidence to support the impression, that students responded initially the way they thought the interviewer expected. The interviewer believed that more honest comments occurred after the interviews were well underway. This section, therefore serves merely to introduce the theme of dropping out and the responses should be viewed with caution.

The following table itemizes the types of comments students made in response to the opening question, "Why did you leave school?"

Comment	Number Making Comment *
General comments re school/system - boring/ didn't like, etc.	67
Wanted to get job/earn money	25
Personal reasons - marriage/home problems	24
Didn't like courses/subjects	17
Plans changed/didn't need high school/course	16
Couldn't take tension	14
Negative comments about teachers	12
Was failing	12
Was skipping	9
Negative comments about administration	8
Was sick/had been sick that year	8
Didn't like the kids/had no friends there	5
Was older than rest of kids/more mature	4
Took another course - business school, night school/ community college, university, etc.	3
Suspended/expelled	2
No reason/can't really say	2
Other	4
TOTAL COMMENTS	232
BASE (All students interviewed)	(105)

* In this and all following tables, unless otherwise specified, numbers in this column will not total 105 (the total number of students interviewed) due to multiple coding.

Nearly two-thirds (67) of the 105 students responded to the opening question by making derogatory comments about school or by mentioning their own dissatisfaction with school or educational system.

- School was boring.*
- Was totally fed up.
- I just couldn't get along with the school.
- School was no challenge - it was too easy.
- My workload was too heavy. I had six essays to write at the same time.
- I didn't like the teachers, the courses or the way the school was set up.
- I felt school was a waste of time. I totally lost interest.
- I hate this school.
- The school was too restrictive.
- I didn't like the way the school was run.
- I guess I just had my fill of it.

Twenty-five students said they wanted to get a job and earn money. Several, at first, said this was their only reason for leaving school, but later cited complaints about the school system or mentioned other factors which were also important.

- Left because I had better things to do, there was a job I wanted to get into.
- I wanted to work.
- I got myself a job and worked and enjoyed the money.

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* Comments preceded by a dot are taken directly from the interviewers' records and are close approximations of what the student actually said.

- I was going to school and working and not living at home. I couldn't do it.
- I wanted to try the working world and see what it was like
- Other people were working and could make their own time. They had money to spend.
- Moved away from home ... but there was not enough money.

Twenty-four students said that their reasons for leaving were of a personal nature such as family problems or marriage. Again it should be emphasized that in most cases the students had other reasons for leaving as well and these emerged as the interviews progressed. One student however very simply stated,

- I could tell you why I left school but it wouldn't have anything to do with improving the school system. There were physical and personal reasons. It had nothing to do with the school at all.

and abruptly terminated the conversation.

Other comments regarding personal factors tended to be quite brief and to the point.

- I left school because I wanted to get out of Toronto.
- I was doing pretty good but then my mother died.
- I left school because I got married.
- My dad treated me like I was ten years old. I got out of school and the house. I couldn't leave home and not leave school.
- My parents are dead and I was living with my sister. My boyfriend was there all the time. He wasn't in school. He didn't work. My sister would go to work and I wouldn't go to school.
- I was married and living with my in-laws. My husband was at university. I left to get a job so we could move out on our own.

Seventeen students responded to this initial query by stating that they didn't like their courses or subjects.

- The school didn't offer me what I wanted.
- I didn't like all my classes.
- I want to be a farmer. They have no courses for that in the city.
- The course was a dead end. It really wasn't what I wanted.

Along these same lines were comments from 16 students about changed plans which made attending school pointless.

- I left school to get into a trade.
- I am going into harness racing. There is no need for formal education.
- I had decided not to go to university. That's all Grade 13 is for.
- I went to Seneca to take the Tourism Industry course. My girl friend's father is head of a travel agency and I got a job there without a high school education.

Fourteen students spoke of the tension involved in school attendance and of the tremendous stress it placed on them.

- I was under constant pressure and I didn't know the source.
- The doctor had me on tranquillizers.
- There was competition in everything - everything was sickening.
- I really couldn't take it any more.

Twelve didn't like their teachers and eight found fault with the administration.

- There wasn't enough help when you need it.
- If a teacher took one day off to get to know the kids the kids would learn three times as fast.
- I didn't get along with the teachers.

- One teacher pried into my personal life.

- They try to make everyone the same.

Twelve students said they were failing or thought they would fail and therefore dropped out, and 9 said they were skipping classes so often they thought it was pointless to continue .

- To tell the truth I found that I had been skipping more than I had been attending.

- I had three or four spares in a row. I used to go home and not want to go back to school.

- In the first term I was getting more fed up. I skipped classes. I lost two subjects. I didn't have enough credits for the year.

Eight students mentioned the fact that they were older or more mature than the other students. Most of them had either dropped out of school before or had failed a couple of times. This discomfort at being older seemed more prevalent in the lower grades where two years difference in age is more noticeable .

- I had failed before. I was behind all the kids in my class.

- Last year I was seventeen in Grade 10 and I didn't fit in. Most of the kids were fifteen. I was out of their age bracket.

- I am twenty-five years old. It was hard to communicate or associate with the students. That was the biggest hassle.

Sickness was wholly or partially blamed by eight of the students for their dropping out. Some had been sick earlier in the year and never got caught up and some dropped out when they became ill.

- I left because I couldn't function there. I had a car accident and missed half the year. I didn t know what was happening.

- I left school for medical reasons. I had a nervous breakdown - not caused by the school.

. I was out of school for two months because of surgery. I was going to fail anyway. I had tutors but they advised me to leave.

As noted earlier, many students did not discuss their reasons for leaving school in much depth at the beginning of the interview. The majority simply made negative quite general comments about school and their reactions to school. However, throughout the interviews several of the points made in response to the opening question were reiterated. For example, although only 12 students mentioned at the beginning of the interview that they left school because they were failing, later 8 additional students said this was a factor. Similarly, skipping was mentioned initially by 9 students but 18 other students brought up this point as their interviews progressed.

ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

As noted in the Introduction, there were ten school-related factors about which the interviewer queried the drop-outs. If the student did not mention a specific factor spontaneously, he was queried. For example the interviewer would probe with question such as,

"You haven't mentioned your teachers yet".

"How about your parents, what did they say?"

"How were your marks?"

To preserve the natural flow of the conversations as much as possible, the interviewer attempted to relate his questions to what the individual had just said or to probe with particular questions at appropriate times.

This section of the report contains an analysis of the comments, those freely offered and those in response to questioning, which students made about dropping out.

Teachers and Teaching

Table 3 itemizes the comments made about teachers and teaching methods.

TABLE 3

Comments	Number Making Comment
Liked teachers	48
Disliked teachers	27
Some teachers were good, some were bad	27
Mostly indifferent to teachers	5
Positive personal relationship with teachers	24
Negative personal relationship with teachers	23
Positive teacher-class relationships	4
Negative teacher-class relationships	12
Quality of teaching methods : - good	18
- bad	25
Teachers too strict	13
Expected too much/assigned too much work	9
Showed favouritism/treated students differently	6
Teachers expressed disappointment because student quit	6
Other	6
No comment made	2
TOTAL COMMENTS	255
BASE (All students interviewed)	(105)

Reactions to teachers were mixed. Not quite half the respondents spoke of liking the teachers or one teacher in particular.

- They were marvelous, most of them.
- Most were very good.
- Most were nice guys.
- I really enjoyed the art and English teachers.

Twenty-seven disliked their teachers.

- A couple of teachers started getting down on me.
- The physical education teacher asked me to play football but I didn't want to. I didn't like the coaches.
- The teachers were crazy.

Another 27 felt that some of the teachers were good and some were not.

- I liked some of the teachers but not all.
- Some were helpful, some were not.

About a quarter (24) thought their personal relationships with teachers were good.

- I got along great with my teachers.
- I liked the teachers generally. There was none there I was really close to.
- The teachers were alright. They understood what you were saying.

Twenty-three made some negative reference to their relationships with the teachers.

- I didn't get along with some of the teachers.
- One teacher was against me. I didn't get kicked out of the course, but I did get detentions and zeros.

Twelve of the respondents made a total of 22 negative comments about the teachers' relationships with classes.

- Students can't trust teachers. There is no communication.
- Some sort of talked down to you..... treated you like children.
- The teachers didn't look at it from the students' point of view.

The quality of teaching or teaching methods were mentioned by 43 of the respondents. Eighteen commented favourably.

- The teachers were good. They had very good teachers there.
- I liked the teachers. They had a good attitude.
- I like the way the teachers are ready to listen to you. They don't just spill out the facts and figures.

There was a greater number of negative responses concerning quality or methods of teaching (32 comments were made by 25 people).

- They could take more time explaining things.
- The teachers didn't know what they were doing.
- Some teachers killed the subjects for me.
- Some don't teach right.

Six people spoke of favouritism on the part of teachers. This was seen as poor teacher attitudes towards four year students or as giving low marks to anyone disagreeing with the teacher.

- The teacher always had some pets.
- Some kids in the class who didn't know more than me got good marks because they agreed with the teacher.
- One teacher thought four year kids were pretty stupid. She taught really Mickey Mouse stuff from grade 5 to us.

School or School Environment

Comments about this topic were more varied. Many students made several comments and a majority of their comments were critical . Table 4 summarizes the responses.

TABLE 4

Comments	Number Making Comment
Criticisms of system/the way school was run/too many rules/regulations/too rigid, etc.	47
General negative reaction to school/didn't like school/ terrible school/boring	35
Positive reaction to school/okay/no complaints	32
Negative comments about student body/cliquish/ unfriendly/snobbish/cold	28
Positive reaction to social life/was involved/had friends	19
Had no friends at school	14
School too free/too open/needs more direction	13
Negative reference to drugs at school	13
There was lots to be involved in/sports/plays, etc.	13
Didn't participate/didn't get involved	11
Positive reaction to school facilities and equipment	9
Was just like other schools	4
Other	15
TOTAL COMMENTS	253
BASE (All students interviewed)	(105)

Criticisms of the system and the way school was run were made by 47 students Some felt the school was too restrictive, and objected strongly to rules they considered stupid.

- There is too much discipline.
- There is no smoking on school property. It is a ridiculous rule.
- There should be a free school system. The laws at school are no good. If you're late three times you get suspended. When you threaten kids it turns them off.
- There are too many taboos.
- Get rid of stupid rules.
- It wasn't the school, it was the system.
- The system was very cold - maybe because I was a stranger there.
- Teachers make you put up your hand to say anything - it's military.
- The system should be reorganized. ., there should be different levels of learning for slow learners and fast learners.

More general negative references to the school were made by 35 respondents.

- There were too many students at the school.
- I just couldn't get along with the school.
- I got to Grade 13 and then I didn't like anything about the school.
- There was nothing nice about the environment.
- I did not like the atmosphere one bit. It was depressing.
- It was a negative environment. There were nothing that I enjoyed.
- It was a terrible school.
- High school is the stupidest thing ever invented.

Thirteen indicated that they felt the school was too free, that they needed more direction and they couldn't handle the freedom.

- It's completely free - it's hard for me to get into it.
- I need someone to push me.
- It used to be strict - now it's not. It leads to looseness in the students - skipping.
- Get rid of stupid 'rubes'. When a kid skips, strap him. Get teachers who are going to yell. It's the only thing that will improve the schools. Make them super strict.

There were 13 respondents who mentioned the drug situation at the school. Many of them had come from other schools or other countries and they were upset by what they considered to be the prevalence of drug use in this school. Two people dropped out because of their own use of drugs.

- The kids were not right. The kids were smoking grass. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't go to a school like that.

Forty-three comments were made by 28 respondents who saw the student body as snobbish, cliquish or cold.

- A lot of the kids were snobbish. I made some good friends there but on the whole the kids were cold.
- The kids were snobby. There was competition in everything. Everything was sickening.
- There wasn't much school spirit. The kids are snobby.
- Everybody was in little cliques .
- I thought the kids were disgusting.

Fourteen of the respondents indicated that they had no friends at the school.

- It was hard to make friends. I didn't know anybody there.

- I only had one friend. It was difficult for me. I just went into the school. I was sort of an outsider.

- I didn't have any friends there. I had only been there for three months.

- Eventually got to the point where I didn t talk to anyone at school, if I met someone at a party, that person would ignore me the next time we met. I hated the atmosphere there.

- I was lonely. There was no one to talk to, no one paid any attention. No kids walk up to you and talk to you. The kids all stare at you as if you had 50 heads.

On the other hand many of the drop-outs made positive statements about school as well as negative ones. In fact several students were quite vocal in praising the school and had nothing critical to say. A total of 32 made some favourable but general comments about liking school.

- It was the best school I ever went to . I enjoyed it..... was alright. I didn't really have any complaints.

- The school was alright. It is a good school.

- It really is a good school.

Thirty-two students mentioned specifically that they had a satisfying social life at school or were involved in extra activities.

- The school has lots of activities. I was involved in gymnastics, pool and the orchestra. They held me in school.

- The social environment of the school was great. That's what I was there for. I was having a good time.

- The kids there were really great.

- There are shows and sports to join. All you need is interested students for activities. There are enough there.

Although most of the students made a combination of favourable and unfavourable statements about school, there was a much larger proportion of comments reflecting dissatisfaction.

Academic Standing

If the student did not mention how well he was doing academically, he was asked,

"How were you doing last year?"

Table 5 itemizes the responses.

TABLE 5

Comments	Number Making Comment
Not doing too well/marks poor	33
Doing very well/doing well/doing fairly well	33
Marks lower than before	22
Would have failed	20
Doing well in some subjects/not well in others	11
Marks about the same as before	10
Didn't have to work to get good marks	3
Other	3
TOTAL COMMENTS	135
BASE (All students interviewed)	(105)

Thirty-three respondents felt that they had been "doing well" in school, seven of them "very well".

- My marks are not too bad.
- They weren't really bad at all. I wasn't failing.

- I was an honour student.
- My marks were very good.

Three other students commented that they didn't have to work to get good marks.

An equal number (33) felt their work was poor or that they were not doing well and 20 of the drop-outs who were interviewed indicated that they probably would have failed had they stayed in school.

- The second term I didn t do too well.
- I bombed - my marks were in the 40's.
- I didn't think I was going to pass.
- I was going to fail again.

About one-tenth thought they were doing well in some subjects and badly in others.

- My marks were good in some subjects - in others, pretty bad. Math and physics were my weak subjects. My gym marks were zilch. I didn't go at all.
- I did pretty good in some subjects and not well in others.

Twenty-two said that their academic achievement was lower than in previous years. Ten said they were doing about the same as before. No one felt that his work was improving.

- My marks were going down.
- I used to do well at school.
- It was the worst year I'd ever had.
- My marks were poor. They were lower than usual.

Several students said they had not been in the school long enough to get any marks and consequently didn't know how they were doing academically.

Reactions of Parents

Many students did not mention how their parents felt about their leaving school, unless questioned. The following table lists the reactions the students reported.

TABLE 6

Comment	Number Making Comment
Disappointed/upset/very disappointed, very upset/ angry	60
Said I was old enough to decide for myself	26
No use staying if you're not getting anywhere/ it's all for the best	19
No reaction/neutral	14
Okay if you get a job	13
TOTAL COMMENTS	132
BASE (All students interviewed)	(105)

Over half the respondents (60) said that their parents were not happy about their leaving school. Many parents were disappointed, upset and, in some cases, angry.

- I'm sure they were upset.
- They were disappointed.
- My mother was heartbroken.
- they took a fit.

Twenty-six of the drop-outs stated that their parents believed they were old enough to decide for themselves.

- They thought it was up to me completely.
- My father told me it was my decision.

- They said it was my problem.
- My mother said I was old enough to realize what I wanted. It was my decision.

Nineteen students said their parents agreed that it was just as well to get out of school when you are not getting anywhere or not getting anything out of it. The parents of 13 agreed that they should leave school and go to work.

- They thought it would be best for me. If I was doing good they probably wouldn't have agreed.
- My mom thought it was the best idea. She thought school was too hard on me.
- They knew I wasn't progressing. They didn't mind too much.
- My father said: "if you don't get good marks go to work".

Fourteen reported that their parents had no reaction or were neutral.

- My dad really had no reaction.
- Can't say for sure.
- They didn't say much.

The parents of nine students thought that leaving school was a good idea.

- They both thought that I should get into my vocational area early.
- They wanted me to.

Clearly a number of the parents did not appear to object strongly to their children leaving school, at least in the perceptions of the students. However, well over half the students' parents were upset or angry.

Reactions of Friends

The students did not tend to discuss the reactions of their friends in much detail, and again often did not mention them unless specifically asked. What they did say is summarized in Table 7.

TABLE 7

Comments	Number Making Comment
No strong reaction/neutral	31
Many have or had quit	28
Disapproved/thought I was crazy	18
Surprised.	9
Some approved, some disapproved	8
Understanding	7
Approved	6
Said I'd be sorry/wouldn't get a job	6
Other	2
Don't know/didn't tell anyone/had no friends at school/unable to answer	22
TOTAL COMMENTS	137
BASE (All students interviewed)	(105)

Thirty-one of the students who were interviewed indicated that their friends had no strong reaction or that they were neutral.

- They said it was up to me.
- They said nothing.

More than a quarter (28) of the respondents said that a number of their friends had also dropped out of school before, after or at the same time as they did. In many cases it was the only comment made about the reaction of friends.

Eighteen drop-outs reported that their friends disapproved.

- They said I was crazy
- Most of my friends thought it was not a good idea to leave.
- They said I was kind of stupid.

Twenty-two either did not know or could not say what their friends thought. Others included in this group, said they had no friends to tell or, had not told their friends.

- I don't know
- There was not much they could say.
- I had no friends.
- I wasn't that personal with my friends.

Some who were failing or had personal problems said that their friends understood especially when the person felt a need to leave home or was already living away from home and had to get a job.

Nine respondents said their friends were surprised at their decision to leave school, especially in cases where the students were doing well academically.

Previous Drop-Outs

The interviewer asked most students, "Have you ever thought of dropping out before?" since it was something rarely mentioned spontaneously. The following table shows the responses.

TABLE 8

Response	Number Making Response
No	49
Yes	29
Had dropped out before	10
Was expelled before	2
No Answer/question not asked	15
BASE (All Students interviewed)	(105)*

The idea of leaving was new to almost half (49) of the respondents who stated that they had never considered dropping out before.

Twenty-nine had thought about it, ten had, in fact, dropped out before and two had been expelled previously.

Some students indicated they had trouble adapting to the different atmosphere and system they encountered in the move from junior high school or from another high school and that this precipitated their leaving school.

It should be noted that the interviewer used some discretion in asking this question of students who seemed reserved or hostile. Others were not asked because they terminated the interview before the topic was discussed.

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* No multiple coding

Advice to Other Students

All students were asked "What advice would you give to someone who was thinking of dropping out of school?"

The responses to this question were varied and numerous, although a large majority of the students would urge other students to remain in school if possible. Many students qualified this answer however by suggesting alternatives. A summary of the Results is given in the following Table.

TABLE 9

Response		Number Making Response
Don't go/stay (no reason stated)		39
Stay in school:		65
you can get a better job/ it's hard to find a job/keep a job/	28	
it's hard to go back if you leave	10	
You need your matric/education	9	
You can get into college or university	8	
Good students should stay	5	
it's wasteful/you'll be sorry	5	
Go ahead and leave:		60
If you have a good reason/plans/ good prospects/a job	34	
You can always go back	10	
A matric doesn't help you in some jobs.	11	
If you're not doing well/not learning/not getting anything out of it.	5	
It depends on the individual/it's up to that person		28
Think carefully/don't quite the spur of the moment		13
Change school		7
Take alternat schoolin .A.T. night school, etc		4
Other		10
No answer/can't say		6
TOTAL COMMEr		232
BASE (All students int wed		(105)

A third of the respondents described why they felt students should remain in school by saying that one can get a better job if one has a good education or it is hard to find and keep a job with little formal education.

- You have to go through a lot to get a half decent one. "It's better to stay in school than wander around looking for a job".
- "I can't get a good job now."
- There are no jobs. It's a bad situation, can't get good pay. I couldn't live on what I was making.
- "Everybody is getting laid off now."

Over 10% thought that it was hard to go back after you had been out of school. They stressed that it was difficult to adjust to the loss of income, that it was too confining to have to "sit in class" and also that the restrictions of school and the attitudes of the administration were harder to cope with than those in the working world.

- If you've been out more than a year, forget it.

Over a third of the respondents said that if you have good reasons for quitting, have plans or good prospects or a job, it is alright to quit. Many of those who are now in what they consider good situations, made comments of this nature.

- Know what you're doing. You should have a job or be getting married. You should have something. I wouldn't have left school if I wasn't getting married.
- "If they had something going I would advise it".
- If you need to support yourself it's easier to get a full-time than a part-time job.

Over a tenth of the respondents said it was alright to leave because you can always go back. Some said a period of working would show drop-outs the value of school.

- "Some kids quit and then go back. .. It's better in the long run".

Twelve of the people said that in many jobs a high school diploma is of little or no value. A number who left school are apprenticed in trades.

- "Even with Grade 12 you have to start at the bottom anyway".

Thirty of the respondents indicated that they felt it was up to the individual to make his own decision about whether or not he left school. Some indicated they felt it presumptuous for them to advise or influence others.

- "It's up to them. I had no pressure on me to stay. I shouldn't pressure anyone else to stay"
- It depends on the person. It was good for me. I'm glad I did it.
- " I couldn't give advice. What might be right for me would not be for others.

Seven would advise a student to change schools rather than drop out. Four others suggested alternative forms of education such as a community college or night school.

- If they don't like the system - go to a different school.
  Talk to the guidance counsellors. You can find a school to suit you.

Thirteen thought that no one should drop out on the spur of the moment.

- "Should think twice about it. Where they might be in five years. What they might be doing".

Two said that no one should leave to go on unemployment.

There was agreement that dropping out, generally, is not a good thing but that it is alright if you have good reason or something specific, such as a job, to go to and that, basically, the decision is dependent on the individual's own circumstances.

Present Status

Many students informed the interviewer about what they were doing without being asked. Those that did not offer this information were asked "What are you doing now?" Responses are summarized in Table 10.

TABLE 10

Comment	Number Making Comment
Working/have a good job	51
Nothing/unemployed	20
Community college or other course	13
Back at the same school	11
Attending another high school	6
Taking correspondence courses	3
Attending night school	2
At university	1
No answer	1
TOTAL COMMENTS	108
BASE (All Students interviewed)	(105)

Of the 51 students who reported they were working, 21 indicated they had good jobs or were satisfied with their jobs.

Other students described their jobs but did not say what they felt about them. Several students indicated they didn't like working. One boy philosophically remarked "a job is a job". A few examples of comments about jobs are listed below.

- I'm a waitress making a lot of money and working short hours.
- Work is being ordered around, school is better.
- Working in shipping and receiving.... it's boring.
- I'm a bank teller.
- It's an interesting job.
- I really like it. I wouldn't trade it for anything.
- I play sax and bass and sing in a club band. I'm really into it.

Some of the other jobs the drop outs held or are holding included running his own business (bought by the boy's father), receptionist, harness racing, mail clerk,

manager, delivery van driver, shipper, bus driver, and apprenticeships.

Twenty of the respondents said they were unemployed. Most of them have held some kind of job since leaving school and a few felt they had good prospects and were hoping to get a job shortly. Three of the unemployed girls had married and had babies since leaving school.

Thirteen students said they were attending Seneca or another Community College. Several mentioned taking up-grading courses whereas others enrolled in specific courses such as photography or tourism. A total of 17 returned to high school, 11 to the same school and 6 to another high school. Some of the students who returned to high school indicated they still were unhappy but most are more satisfied this year. A few who were unemployed had returned to school this year but had dropped out again.

In all, thirty-six of the drop-outs had returned to some kind of education and were still involved in it when interviewed. Three of them had full time jobs and were continuing their education at night. Others had enrolled in courses and had either finished or quit by the time they were interviewed.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

All the students who were interviewed were asked "Would you go back to school?" This question seldom elicited a simple yes or no. Several students elaborated on their plans, and most gave some kind of explanation for their decision. As a result there are 125 responses from the 105 students. Responses are categorized in the following table.

TABLE 11

Response		Number Making Response
AFFIRMATIVE		
Back in high school or have definite plans to return	15	
Now in alternate system, e.g. community college/ night school/correspondence course	14	
No definite plans-would prefer an alternate system, e.g. community college/night school/ correspondence	11	
Definite plans to go to an alternate system	9	
Will go/am going to University	8	
No definite plans - would like to go back to high school	4	
TOTAL AFFIRMATIVE		61
NEGATIVE		
Will not go back to high school	16	
Prefer career/working	16	
Will not go back to high school, but might consider an alternate program	9	
Too old for high school	6	
Married	2	
TOTAL NEGATIVE		49
UNDECIDED		
Don't know/maybe		10
NO ANSWER		5
TOTAL COMMENTS		125
BASE (All Students Interviewed)		105

As can be seen, almost half of those interviewed are either at present in an educational program or have positive attitudes about continuing their education, although their plans are not yet formalized. Fifteen of the respondents stated that they are back in high school, or have definite plans to return. Twenty-three are now in an alternate program, such as community college, or have definite plans to return. Four are at present in university, and a further four have set university as their ultimate educational goal. Some comments from those who have returned to high school follow:

- My attitude has changed now. I took a good look at it. I have always been lazy but I found school wasn't that hard if I decided to do it.
- I'm back at my former school now. I didn't stay long at the school I dropped out of.
- It wasn't worth it, quitting. I am back now and things are going better. I wasn't looking for the good things, always looking for the bad things.

The twenty-three students who said that they were now in an alternate educational system, or had definite plans to study, either at community college, night school or by correspondence made the following types of comments.

- I tried to get into Seneca in May but I was too young. I will try again later.
- I left school to go to the Radio College of Canada. I'm still there now.
- I'm going to Seneca in January to finish Grade 12.
- I'm taking a college preparatory course now. I will go to Seneca later.
- I'm learning faster at night school.
- I am getting my Grade 12, not at that school but on my own. I don't have time to waste on this system.
- I want my Grade 12. I will go to night school for my diploma.

Other comments about continuing education included the following:

- I would go back if I could. I would not go back to another school.
- I plan to finish school sometime. I can't just now, I just had a baby.
- I'm thinking of going back next year.

Sixteen respondents have no intention of returning to high school.

- I don't think I would go back to day school.
- I would not go back to high school as it is now.
- I would never go back to school.

Several reasons were given for this attitude, such as "the system doesn't suit me", "I wasn't learning the things I wanted". Six respondents also mentioned that they were too old for high school and couldn't fit in, or that by the time they were ready to return they would be too old.

Another group (18) stated that they were not interested in further education since they were satisfied with their present jobs, were working towards specific career goals, or were married.

- I figured I had quite a few years ahead of me and I might as well start working then.
- I didn't want more formal education. I am planning on starting a trucking business.
- I would rather work than go to school.
- I'm apprenticing for a gas fitter. It's good when you get your license - seven dollars an hour. You don't need education. You need to know the business.
- I was thinking of going back to night school before my last promotion. Now I'm not.

Courses and Workload

A total of 81 students commented about courses or their work load without being specifically asked. The following table outlines the different types of comments these students made.

TABLE 12

Comments		Number Making Comment
Negative re Courses/Curriculum		60
General unfavourable comments	23	
Not useful/dull/forced to take things you don't like	31	
Prefer more specialization	6	
Some courses good/some bad		26
Negative re workload		18
Too heavy/too hard	11	
Too light/too easy	7	
Credit system		9
Bad	4	
Good	5	
Courses good/ like courses		8
Classes too big/no individual attention		7
TOTAL COMMENTS		128
BASE (All Students Interviewed)		(105)

Sixty students had something derogatory to say about courses. Of these, 23 simply said they did not like their courses or that their subjects were no good.

- It was the subjects, not the teachers, that I didn't like.
- The course I took was the only bad thing about the school.
- I didn't like the courses.
- I didn't like most of my subjects.
- I would think about going back if I only had to take subjects I liked.

The other students had more specific complaints about their courses, the chief being that they felt it was pointless to take subjects you do not like or do not need.

- The relevance of what you are doing is never discussed.
- They could make courses more interesting.... could make them pertinent to what you will do later.
- Can see taking classes to become what I want to become, can't see taking subjects I won't need.
- ..... was boring, it was stupid.
- If you don't need a course, say Math. or P.E., you don't take it.
- The other courses just got in your way.
- The course was a dead-end.
- I didn't like the early streaming... once you're in something you're stuck with it.
- The flexibility of the school program - the new policies - is a pile of bunk.
- I left school because in Grade 13 you can't pick your own courses.
- I only liked art but I had to take the other subjects.

- Academic subjects bothered me. I couldn't do mathematics in math. but I could do it in auto mechanics.

- I was taking things I didn't feel were necessary.

These criticisms seem to suggest that the students resent having to take subjects which they either dislike or consider to be of little value. In fact, one student was quite vociferous on the topic, constantly mentioning it in conversation with the interviewer. To begin he stated,

- It was not what I wanted or needed to know.... it was more useful to get out and do something.

Later, he continued this theme,

- There is too much to put up with outside of what you want, there should be government sponsored - course specialty programs you could go to 4 hours one night a week, without the crap - the other stuff they say its important. It's not .

He concluded his interview by saying,

- You shouldn't have to take P.E. over a certain age... they should have to take it when they're small to see if they like it, then later they should not have to.

Twenty-six drop-outs stated that some courses were good and some were bad.

- Some courses and subjects were boring - others were interesting.

- There were only a couple of courses I liked .

Only eight students spoke of liking their courses.

- They had good courses.

- Most classes were okay.

Eighteen students discussed their work load, the majority claiming it was too heavy.

- I was piled with work.
- I found it difficult.
- There were so many things to hand in in each subject.
- Other kids quit because the year was too hard. It was too difficult.
- A student had lots of projects due at the same time.

On the contrary, seven felt that the work load was too light or the courses too easy.

- Everyone says Grade 13 is too easy. You don't have to work to get good marks.
- I found school boring but easy.
- It's easier to get high marks at.....

The credit system was mentioned by 9 students, 4 in support of it and five negative.

- I didn't like the credit system
- I dropped out because I didn't like the credit system. I was getting farther behind. I decided to drop out. The credit system was really bad.
- The credit system is okay because you can move at your own speed.

Administration

Again, although students were not queried about administration, a number of students (34) commented. The majority of their comments were negative.

Typical remarks about the principal and vice-principal were derogatory and to the effect that they were "stupid", "on cloud 9", "not aware of the drug problem in the school". They were seen as having negative attitudes toward students with bad records. They were also described as being "on the backs" of some people and, in some cases, were cited as the prime reason for the student's dropping out. There

were only six positive comments about the administration.

The School Board was cited as ineffectual by three people.

- The Board doesn't know which way to turn.
- The Board doesn't know what's going on (re drugs)

Guidance Department

Although students were not asked to discuss the guidance department, 16 spontaneously mentioned the topic. Half the comments were critical and half were positive.

Those students who made positive comments about the Guidance Department or personnel, made such statements as:

- Guidance tried everything to help me, they even sent tutors to me in the hospital.
- The guidance counsellor was just fantastic, really a lot of help.... would stop and talk to me outside the school .....
- They are marvellous people.

Critical comments about Guidance included the following statements:

- There should be more counselling when you quit, they said, well you're sure you want to quit and gave me 50 forms to fill out and I handed in my books, no one talked to me... tried to talk me into staying.
- Screwed me a few times, you can't trust them. I would ask that something I said be kept confidential and the next day it would be all over the office.

One student who felt that Guidance did provide a valuable service commented,

- A lot of people think Guidance is useless. Maybe because these people ask for the impossible. Some kids don't like to ask for help.....

INTERVIEWER'S NOTES

It should be noted that the families of the dropouts were, on the whole, very co-operative in assisting the interviewer to contact the students. They gave the interviewer telephone numbers where the students might be reached and took messages. Only a few parents reacted negatively to having their children interviewed. These few were very suspicious as to the nature of the interview and two refused to give any assistance in contacting the students.

The students themselves were, generally, very friendly and open. Many were quite articulate about what influenced them to leave school. Almost forty percent said that 1971 - 72 was their first year at this school and that they found it hard to make friends and never really felt a part of the school. The interviewer believed that for these students the fact of being new to the school and very probably lonely was a serious influence in their decision to leave school.

A number of the former students were quite bitter about what they considered to be unreasonable restrictions, rigid course requirements and the uselessness of getting a high school diploma. None directed any of this bitterness against the interviewer. A few were somewhat abrupt or abrasive at first but the informal nature of the interview put a majority of the students at ease. Only a relatively small number of subjects remained guarded or hostile throughout the interview.

SUMMARY

On the basis of the information obtained from the students who were interviewed, it is not possible to isolate any one factor or even any group of factors as definitive reasons for dropping out of school. Since the study was purposely designed to look at school related factors only, - it should be noted that many students spontaneously disclosed reasons unrelated to school. This suggests that what happens to a drop out both in school and outside school influences him in reaching the decision to leave.

Initial reactions of the students to the question, "WHY DID YOU LEAVE SCHOOL?" included both school related factors and outside factors. General dissatisfaction, frustration or boredom with school was a common reason given. The desire to earn money or personal reasons such as problems at home were also mentioned fairly frequently. Other students commented more specifically, complaining about courses, teachers, tension, the administration and the student body. As the interviews progressed it became evident that frequent skipping and lengthy absences preceded many students' decisions to drop out. Finally, although only a relatively small number of students mentioned courses or work load in responding to the initial question, there were 73 students who, unprompted, made complaints in this area during their interviews.

Reactions to topics specifically queried by the interviewer can be summarized as follows:

- Approximately half the comments made about teachers or teaching methods were positive and about half were critical.

- Of the many comments about school or the school environment, roughly one-third were positive; some students simply indicated that school was all right, or

they had no complaints, others mentioned the social life or facilities. Criticisms, which were made twice as often, included objections to the way the school was run, expressions of general dissatisfaction with school and indications of a feeling of alienation from other students.

- Approximately one-third of the drop-outs told the interviewer that they were doing well in their courses. Not quite two-thirds felt they were doing poorly or would have failed.

- More than half of the parents of drop-outs were upset or disappointed about their child leaving school.

- Nearly one-half the students said they had never thought of dropping out of school previously, but on the other hand, well over one-third had either dropped out before or considered doing so.

- A large majority of the drop-outs said they would advise other students to remain in school or seek alternative schooling.

- Over half the drop-outs said they are back or would consider going back to school although many of these students qualified this by indicating they would return to an alternative educational system only.

- Roughly half the drop-outs who were interviewed were working at the time the interview took place, about one-fifth said they were doing nothing or were unemployed, and the remainder were pursuing their schooling, mainly in Community Colleges or high school.

- Close to forty percent of the drop-outs mentioned that 1971 - 72 was their first year at the school.

APPENDIX A

NAME: _____

Hello, my name is _____ and I have been employed by the North York Board of Education to conduct a survey of students who have left school before they have finished. Do you have a few minutes to talk to me now?

If "NO" _____
when would be a more convenient time?

If "YES". Well maybe you'd like to know a little more about the research study before we begin. What we are trying to do is work toward improving schools in North York, and we feel that one of the ways we can do this is to talk to people who have different points of view. Anything you say will be kept completely confidential. OK? Well, our first big question is:

WHY DID YOU LEAVE SCHOOL?

Interviewer: BE SURE YOU COVER THE FOLLOWING POINTS.
CHECK OFF AS EACH AREA IS DISCUSSED.

1. Teachers ☐
2. Marks ☐
3. Friends ☐
4. What are you doing now ? ☐
5. School Environment ☐
6. Parents ☐
7. Advice to students going to drop out ☐
8. Have you ever thought of dropping out before? ☐
9. Grade ☐
10. (If appropriate) Would you go back? ☐
11. (If appropriate) Personal "Were there any things outside of school which had any bearing on your leaving? ☐

TO END INTERVIEW

Good, I think that gives me a pretty good idea of why you left school, and what you didn't like about school. Was there anything <u>good</u> about school as far as you are concerned?

(INTERVIEWER - ALLOW TIME FOR RESPONSE)

Thanks. Before we hang up, is there anything else you'd like to comment on?

(INTERVIEWER - ALLOW TIME FOR RESPONSE)

Thank you very much for giving me your time. I've enjoyed this interview.

APPENDIX B

1.

was totally fed up
was old for his class
had failed a few times
was watching kids in his class go through what he went through

He didn't like the way the teachers were
they were high and mighty.

Was not doing very well
didn't stay
didn't do anything
half the stuff he was taking was irrelevant
doubted if he would use it.

Most of his friends were out of school
They had either finished or quit
a few still go.

He went to Seneca - quit high school in October or November
went to Seneca in January.
- Seneca was not much either.
took the upgrading course - was good
was too basic
the math was amazingly simple - it was insane
he passed that

Now he is working for the Federal Government
is in charge of the outgoing mail for old age pensioners.

The environment of the school was ridiculous
- all the people were running around with their noses in the air.
some teachers were really nice.
there was a lot he couldn't take
probably the students made the faculty that way.

His parents didn't like his leaving
he was going towards a nervous breakdown or something
school was doing it to his head.

Advice to a student - if they didn't get as far behind as he did - stay
he was 18 in grade 10.
lots of the kids were 3 years younger than him
it drove him nuts.

Not really no.
dropped out at the end of the year before.

has Grade 10 from the upgrading.

Was in Grade 10
had to take 9 and 10 at Seneca in his 4 month course.
It may not count in the school board system.

Go back? he probably would if he found the right school
couldn't say.

The Guidance people screwed him a few times
you couldn't trust them.
He would ask that something he said be kept confidential and the next day it would be all over the office.

There were no outside influences
"just the feelings about school"
"I got so uptight I was going nuts"
decided to leave.

The school had a good gym and a good art course
there were some good courses - structurally - but they were taught lousy

they say "pick your own subjects" - but you didn't get the ones you want
they tell you what to take.
If they don't want you in a course - they tell you its filled -
the guidance people told him that.

He would like high school to be more informal.
at Seneca - you come into a class and the teacher is a friend.
you're on a first name basis.
it could be OK for High School - make it more relaxed
you would work better.

At ... . - the teacher stands there - is above you. he knows more than you but he doesn't have to let you know it all the time.
they could make courses more interesting
could make them pertain to what you will do later.

Is going to Seneca now.
Is taking high school credits there to get into Seneca College.

He dropped out because he didn't like the system
It was personal - he couldn't get along with the system.
It was not the school - it was the system - the credit system.
He was getting further behind - decided to drop out.
The credit system is really bad.
It was not the teaching.
At ..... - the system changed every year.
- he couldn't cope with all the changes.

His parents were on holiday in Hawaii when he dropped out.
when they came back - they had mixed feelings.
"I decided I needed more education".
to finish high school - grade 11 and 12 would have taken 2 years.
- in Seneca - is taking it all - this year at night.

His marks. - in Grade 10 lousy - failed 2 or 3 subjects
Grade 11 - 60% average, no failures
Grade 12 - 65% average no failures.

Left school in December
not because of marks.
was doing better but was not happy.

The teachers were in his opinion - 50- 50.
he liked some - some were real jerks there
it's the same everywhere.
he didn't get along with a high percentage of the teachers.
he had been there a long time - all the teachers knew him.

His friends - some didn't want him to quit.
- some said it would be for the best.
he wasn't influenced by them.
some of them dropped out to get jobs.
they had mixed feelings.

the environment at ..... was terrible - was no school spirit.
kids are mostly medium and upper class
the drug problem was really bad there
it may be drinking now.
kids are 15 yrs. and up
Parents were not aware of it - teachers weren't either
the Principals were not aware.

no one went to the football games
the school spirit was terrible
the teachers are not close to the kids

You feel you're by yourself.

Students and teachers are not together
the Principal is on cloud 9

There are good facilities there
but terrible environment

He thought about dropping out for one month.
Knew lots of kids who had dropped out.
in Grade 7 - he failed - endured that
- new math was his downfall.
to get into Junior High he took I.Q. tests
- they showed him in genius range - was quite a joke.

He thought kid smarten up.
- thought he would always get through with a minimum of effort.

He found out at ..... about community colleges.
heard about the prep school at Seneca and then dropped out.

Just before Christmas - he left.

Advice to other students - would have to know the person
- some can make it.

He was caught in the credit system.
If you fail one subject - it dangles you end up
one credit short at the end.

He is for education

getting grade 13 and University is great depending on the individual.
He would like to say yes go on to every student -
but he didn't
If you have a good reason - drop out.
- not too much can go wrong - you may just end up going back.

He thought he would work
He was not influenced by his friends or circumstances
You shouldn't let others influence you.

Good things about the school - good looking girls
the learning was good - even though there wasn't enough of it.
the facilities were tremendous there. Things that people always want - swimming pool - fantastic gym equipment.

- didn't use the facilities fully
- no one does.
the teaching was good at times.
the learning experience was fairly good
there were lots of things going on after school.

High schools should stay away from the credit system.
- it can get you in a mess.
especially if you are not aware of how it works.

Public school to Junior High is a big jump.
Junior High to High School is a bigger jump
- no one told him about it.

at high school - you're on your own
teachers don't care about attendance
He was not mature enough to handle it when
he started High School

You can't change that

the schools think the credit system is high and mighty
it can ruin your future.

If it were not for the college prep course
he would probably work in a job - job for the rest of his life.
no one cares about you if you only have grade 10 and need a job
- they laugh behind your back.

the credit system screws everyone a little.
was glad to help me - "Anytime I can help"

Interviewer's Comments - .... certainly did not mind saying what he thought.
- seemed glad to tell someone what he thought.

3.

It's a long story
He started back to school - he had quit the year before for personal reasons
He couldn't stand it.
He couldn t behave the way they wanted.
He didn't like the staff's attitude
He went for 2 weeks or so.

He was in grade 10.

Now he is working in a warehouse

Everybody had a bad attitude the teachers right up to the Principal.
He had a conference with the Principal
- they didn't hit it off so good

His marks generally were not too good
two years ago he was in school 2 months
- he didn't go very often
last year he was skipping

He couldn't say what his friends thought - he never asked them.
He moved at the same time as he quit.
He didn't have any friends in their new area.

He was having personal trouble.

He went to .... the last 2 years.

His parents didn't agree with it - they wouldn't stop him.
He was living at home last year but not the year before.
He is at home now.

Advice to a student - depends on the circumstances
He would advise him to stay if possible or go to night school
"Don't give up altogether".

He would not go back to regular High School.
He is 18 would be in grade 10.
Last year he was 17 in grade 10 and he didn't fit in.
Most of the kids were 15
He was out of their age bracket.

There was nothing good about the school.

The students were pretty cold
they were close together.
that is normal for people generally, in the city.

Comments - obviously didn't want to talk about his personal problems
- not very talkative.